

CONFIDENTIAL PTQ3328

PAGE 01 HARARE 05003 01 OF 03 110846Z
ACTION AF-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	ACQ-00	CEA-01	CIAE-00	CTME-00
	DODE-00	DOFE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	EUR-00	EXIM-01
	E-00	FAAE-00	VC-00	FRB-00	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00
	IO-00	ITC-01	LAB-01	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01	NSAE-00
	OIC-02	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00
	P-00	SP-00	SSO-00	STR-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00	PMB-00
	DSCC-00	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	SWCI-00	/012W

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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE
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INFO NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 005003

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/11/10
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SUBJECT: NEW ZIMBABWE PARLIAMENT STILL FEELING ITS WAY

REF: HARARE 4026

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PAGE 02 HARARE 05003 01 OF 03 110846Z

CLASSIFIED BY AMB. TOM MCDONALD. REASONS: 1.5 (B) AND
(D).

1. (C) SUMMARY: SINCE ITS JULY 20 OPENING (REFTEL), ZIMBABWE'S NEW PARLIAMENT HAS FALLEN INTO RAUCOUS DEBATE AND POLITICAL SPARRING THAT HAS YIELDED FEW CONCRETE RESULTS. ONE HUNDRED EIGHT OUT OF 150 MEMBERS ARE NEW TO THE LEGISLATIVE BODY AND THIS HAS BEEN REFLECTED IN THE LOW QUALITY OF DEBATE. MAIDEN SPEECHES AND PAROCHIAL CONCERNS HAVE CONSUMED MUCH OF THE BODY'S TIME SINCE IT OPENED (IT HAS BEEN IN SESSION ONLY FOUR OF THE LAST SEVEN WEEKS) DESPITE A GENERAL RECOGNITION THAT URGENT ACTION IS NEEDED ON THE COUNTRY'S DIRE ECONOMIC CONDITION. MANY MOVEMENT FOR DEMOCRATIC CHANGE (MDC) MEMBERS HAVE LAMBASTED THE GOVERNMENT, AND IN SOME CASES, PRESIDENT MUGABE PERSONALLY, FOR FAILING TO ADDRESS ZIMBABWE'S MOUNTING WOES AND FOR ORCHESTRATING A CAMPAIGN OF TERROR AGAINST ITS CITIZENS. BEHIND THE SCENES, A MORE SOPHISTICATED COMMITTEE SYSTEM IS TAKING SHAPE, AND THERE ARE SIGNS THAT MEMBERS WILL COOPERATE ACROSS THE AISLE ON SOME ISSUES. HOWEVER, THE WESTMINSTER-STYLE WHIP SYSTEM WILL LIKELY KEEP PARTY MEMBERS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE AISLE IN LINE ON THE ISSUES THAT COUNT MOST. END SUMMARY.

PARLIAMENT, BULLY PULPIT AND THEATRE

2. (U) AFTER A TWO-WEEK BREAK, PARLIAMENT RESUMED ITS
CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 HARARE 05003 01 OF 03 110846Z
SESSION ON AUGUST 29. THE DEBATE SINCE HAS BEEN CHARACTERIZED BY A LEVEL OF POLITICAL ATTACKS AND BACKBENCH SNIPING THAT WOULD PUT LONDON'S PARLIAMENT TO SHAME. EVERY NEW PARLIAMENTARIAN IS BEING GIVEN A CHANCE TO MAKE A MAIDEN SPEECH, AND THESE HAVE CONSUMED MUCH OF THE PARLIAMENT'S TIME. MOST MDC MEMBERS HAVE USED THESE OPPORTUNITIES TO ATTACK THE GOVERNMENT FOR ITS FAILURE TO TURN AROUND THE COUNTRY'S SLIDING ECONOMY WHILE POINTING OUT THE DECLINE IN HEALTH SERVICES OR LACK OF ROAD MAINTENANCE IN THEIR HOME DISTRICTS. SOME MDC MEMBERS HAVE ATTACKED MUGABE PERSONALLY FOR THE VIOLENCE LEADING UP TO THE JUNE PARLIAMENTARY VOTE, AND THESE SPEECHES HAVE RECEIVED PROMINENT COVERAGE IN THE INDEPENDENT "DAILY NEWS." EVELYN MASAITI OF NYANGA DESCRIBED MUGABE ON AUGUST 31 AS A FATHER WHO HAS BETRAYED HIS CHILDREN AND WHO IS NO LONGER WORTHY OF BEING A FATHER. (NOTE: EVELYN MASAITI IS ONE OF THE PLAINTIFFS IN THE CIVIL SUIT FILED AGAINST THE PRESIDENT IN NEW YORK. MORE DETAILED INFORMATION ON THE PLAINTIFFS WILL FOLLOW SEPT. END NOTE.) OUTSPOKEN MP FOR GLEN NORAH, PRISCILLA MISIHAIRABWI-MUSHONGA, RAILED AGAINST MUGABE ON SEPTEMBER 6, SAYING HIS OPENING SPEECH

TO PARLIAMENT (REFTEL) WAS IRRELEVANT TO THE COUNTRY AND THAT HE IS THE SOURCE OF THE COUNTRY'S PROBLEMS AND MUST RESIGN. SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE EMMERSON MNANGAGWA CAUTIONED THE MP AGAINST BEING DISRESPECTFUL OF THE HEAD OF STATE, WHICH CAUSED AN UPROAR FROM THE MDC BENCH.

13. (U) THE THEATRICALS GOT INTO HIGH GEAR ON AUGUST 31 WHEN MISIHATIRABWI THREATENED TO BEAT UP FELLOW MP - AND WAR VETERANS LEADER - CHENJERAI HUNZVI FOR INTERRUPTING
CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 HARARE 05003 01 OF 03 110846Z
HER SEVERAL TIMES DURING HER SPEECH ABOUT THE DECLINING ACCESS TO MEDICINE. DURING THE SEPTEMBER 6 SESSION ATTENDED BY POLOFF, MDC MEMBERS RETURNED THE FAVOR BY HECKLING AND JEERING HUNZVI'S MAIDEN SPEECH AND BROKE INTO LAUGHTER WHEN HUNZVI SUGGESTED FOREIGN DONORS SHOULD PROVIDE TRACTORS TO HIS CONSTITUENTS. HALFWAY THROUGH HUNZVI'S RAMBLING DISCOURSE ABOUT THE HISTORY OF LAND DEPRIVATION BY ZIMBABWE'S COLONIZERS, NEARLY ALL OF THE MDC MEMBERS WALKED OUT.

14. (C) SPEAKER MNANGAGWA SO FAR APPEARS FAIRLY EVEN-HANDED IN HIS RUNNING OF THE PROCEEDINGS, CHOOSING HIS INTERJECTIONS SPARINGLY AND JUDICIOUSLY. ALTHOUGH HE INTERVENES WHEN THE PRESIDENT'S NAME IS DISPARAGED, HE ALSO QUIETS THE RAUCOUS ZANU-PF BENCH WHEN IT DISRUPTS AN MDC MOTION. ON THE OTHER HAND, DEPUTY SPEAKER EDNA MADZONGWE, WHO ACTS AS SPEAKER IN MNANGAGWA'S ABSENCE, HAS BEEN ACCUSED BY MDC MEMBERS OF STIFLING DEBATE. DURING THE QUESTION TIME ON AUGUST 30, THE ENTIRE MDC PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION THREATENED TO WALK OUT WHEN MADZONGWE REPEATEDLY REFUSED TO ALLOW QUESTIONS OF A DEPUTY MINISTER ON THE FAST-TRACK LAND RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM. LIKE IN THE BRITISH PARLIAMENT, OPPOSITION MEMBERS PERIODICALLY HAVE THE CHANCE TO QUESTION GOVERNMENT MINISTERS ABOUT THEIR POLICIES AND ACTIONS.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL PTQ3329

PAGE 01 HARARE 05003 02 OF 03 110846Z
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INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	ACQ-00	CEA-01	CIAE-00	CTME-00
	DODE-00	DOFE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	EUR-00	EXIM-01
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P 110843Z SEP 00
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UNTIL THE SITTING OF THIS PARLIAMENT, QUESTION TIME HAD
CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 HARARE 05003 02 OF 03 110846Z
BEEN A NON-EVENT THAT MINISTERS SELDOM WORRIED ABOUT. NOW THEY ARE BEING SUBJECTED TO CLOSE AND PUBLIC SCRUTINY.

PARLIAMENTARY CRASH COURSE FOR MDC

15. (C) ON SEPTEMBER 1 MDC MP FOR HARARE EAST TENDAI BITI INFORMED POLOFF THAT THE MDC'S MAIN GOAL IN PARLIAMENT IS TO CREATE MORE POLITICAL SPACE FOR THE OPPOSITION. IN ORDER TO DO THIS, IT WILL FOCUS ON PRESSING FOR A NEW CONSTITUTION, EXPOSING GOVERNMENT MISMANAGEMENT, AND GAINING MORE CONTROL OVER THE BUDGET. THE MDC WILL NOT PUSH FOR THE IMPEACHMENT OF MUGABE, ACCORDING TO BITI, AS THE TIME WAS NOT YET RIPE. NOR DOES IT REALISTICALLY EXPECT TO GET FAR WITH ITS REFORMIST AGENDA WHILE ZANU-PF HAS A PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY. BITI ACKNOWLEDGED THAT MDC MPS ARE AT A

DISADVANTAGE IN HOUSE DELIBERATIONS SINCE NOT ALL OF THEM HAVE MASTERED PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURES, SUCH AS TABLING MOTIONS. MANY MDC MPS ARE STILL GRAPPLING WITH FINDING OFFICE SPACE AND SETTING UP TELEPHONES, AND ARE RELYING ON PERSONAL FUNDS UNTIL GOVERNMENT MONEY IS DISBURSED TO COVER THESE EXPENSES.

16. (C) MOST MDC MPS ATTENDED TWO WORKSHOPS SPONSORED BY THE INTERNATIONAL REPUBLICAN INSTITUTUE (IRI) IN JULY AND AUGUST TO HELP GET THEM UP TO SPEED ON PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE. A SIMILAR PARLIAMENTARY TRAINING WORKSHOP IS BEING SPONSORED SEPTEMBER 24-25 BY THE ZIMBABWE CHAMBER
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PAGE 03 HARARE 05003 02 OF 03 110846Z
OF COMMERCE AND THE CONFEDERATION OF ZIMBABWEAN INDUSTRIES (CZI), AND WILL INCLUDE MPS FROM BOTH ZANU-PF AND THE MDC. ACCORDING TO THE IRI RESPRESENTATIVE HERE, AGENTS FROM THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATION (CIO) SHOWED UP AT THE JULY WORKSHOP FOR MDC MEMBERS, ASKING QUESTIONS ABOUT WHO WAS SPONSORING THE EVENT AND WHO WAS ATTENDING IT. THE ENCOUNTER DEMONSTRATED THE SENIOR GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP'S ONGOING MISTRUST OF THE MDC. DESPITE THE GOZ'S MISTRUST, BITI STATED THAT MDC MEMBERS ARE WORKING BEHIND THE SCENES WITH NEWLY ELECTED, MOSTLY YOUNGER ZANU-PF MPS, WHO SEEM RECEPTIVE TO REACHING AN UNDERSTANDING ON A VARIETY OF SECONDARY ISSUES. HOWEVER, BITI DOES NOT EXPECT ANY OF THE ZANU-PF MPS TO BREAK RANKS WITH THE PARTY ON THE CRUCIAL ISSUES OF THE DAY SUCH AS LAND REFORM.

REMAKING THE COMMITTEE SYSTEM

17. (C) SINCE THE MDC NOW CONTROLS MORE THAN A THIRD OF PARLIAMENT, MUCH IS BEING DONE TO REVAMP THE BODY'S COMMITTEE SYSTEM, ACCORDING TO AUSTIN ZVOMA, THE CLERK OF PARLIAMENT AND HIGHEST RANKING CIVIL SERVANT IN PARLIAMENT. TWO OF THE BIGGEST CHANGES HAVE BEEN THE REFORMULATION OF PORTFOLIO COMMITTEES TO REFLECT THE NEW CABINET MINISTRIES AND THE INTRODUCTION OF "SHADOW" MINISTERS, WHO REPRESENT THE OPPOSITION IN PARLIAMENT ON ISSUES DEALT WITH BY THE GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES. THE STANDING RULES AND ORDER COMMITTEE, COMPRISED OF BOTH ZANU-PF AND MDC MEMBERS, HAS ALREADY MET AND DETERMINED
CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 HARARE 05003 02 OF 03 110846Z
THAT THE CHAIRMANSIPS OF THE 12 PORTFOLIO COMMITTEES WILL BE DIVIDED EVENLY BETWEEN ZANU-PF AND MDC. THE IRI REPRESENTATIVE INFORMED US THAT THE MDC IS LIKELY TO CHAIR THE EDUCATION, FOREIGN AFFAIRS, JUSTICE, ENVIRONMENT, AND HEALTH COMMITTEES. BESIDES THE STANDING RULES AND ORDER COMMITTEE, THERE ARE NORMALLY FIVE OTHER STANDING COMMITTEES THAT INCLUDE THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE, WHICH OVERSEES GOVERNMENT SPENDING LEGISLATED BY PARLIAMENT, AND THE ALL-IMPORTANT BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE, WHICH APPROVES THE GOVERNMENT'S BUDGET. ZANU-PF WILL PROBABLY KEEP THE CHAIRMANSIP OF THE MORE INFLUENTIAL STANDING COMMITTEES, SUCH AS BUDGET AND FINANCE. PARLIAMENT IS DUE TO APPOINT THE COMMITTEES AND THEIR CHAIRMEN ON SEPTEMBER 12.

18. (C) THE BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE IS DUE TO BEGIN CONSIDERING THE GOVERNMENT'S BUDGET IN LATE OCTOBER. IT WILL SCRUTINIZE THE BUDGET BEHIND CLOSED DOORS, ZVOMA SAYS, BEFORE SUBMITTING IT TO THE WHOLE HOUSE FOR DEBATE. THE DEADLINE FOR PASSAGE OF THE BUDGET IS JANUARY 1, THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW FISCAL YEAR. THE GOVERNMENT CANNOT LEGALLY LEVY TAXES WITHOUT BUDGETARY APPROVAL FROM PARLIAMENT, THE CLERK STATED. (COMMENT: GIVEN THE NEW MAKEUP OF THIS PARLIAMENT, BUDGETARY DEBATES ARE BOUND TO BE HEATED AND HIGHLY CONTENTIOUS.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL PTQ3330

PAGE 01 HARARE 05003 03 OF 03 110846Z
ACTION AF-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	ACQ-00	CEA-01	CIAE-00	CTME-00
	DODE-00	NOTE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	EUR-00	EXIM-01
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P 110843Z SEP 00
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FINANCE MINISTER SIMBA MAKONI DREW LOUD JEERS OF "SHAME,
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PAGE 02 HARARE 05003 03 OF 03 110846Z
SHAME" FROM MDC MEMBERS ON AUGUST 30 WHEN HE DISCLOSED
THAT THE GOZ HAD SPENT NEARLY US\$200 MILLION ON ITS
INTERVENTION IN THE DROC. END COMMENT.)

REAL ROLE FOR PARTY WHIPS

19. (C) ANOTHER IMPORTANT DIFFERENCE WITH THIS
PARLIAMENT IS THE NEW PROMINENCE OF PARTY WHIPS. IN
PREVIOUS PARLIAMENTS, WITH ZANU-PF'S HUGE MAJORITY,
THERE WAS LITTLE CHANCE OF ANY MEASURE BEING DEFEATED.
IF SOME PARLIAMENTARIANS APPEARED TO WAIVER IN THEIR
SUPPORT OF A PARTICULAR BILL, ZANU-PF WOULD RELY
PRIMARILY ON SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS TO APPLY THE
NECESSARY PRESSURE (EMMERSON MNANGAGWA, AS JUSTICE
MINISTER, WAS NOTABLE IN THIS ROLE). NOW, WITH A
SIZEABLE OPPOSITION, THE POTENTIAL FOR DEFECTION IS MUCH
GREATER, AND INDIVIDUAL MPS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE AISLE
WILL HAVE POTENTIALLY GREATER BARGAINING POWER WITH
THEIR RESPECTIVE PARTIES. HENCE, THERE IS A GREATER
NEED FOR THE WHIPS TO ENSURE THAT PARTY MEMBERS STAY IN
LINE AND VOTE WITH THE PARTY ON KEY MOTIONS AND BILLS.
BOTH ZANU-PF AND MDC HAVE ALREADY HAD TO REIGN IN
RECALCITRANT MPS FOR PUBLIC STATEMENTS THAT WENT AGAINST
PARTY POLICY.

110. (C) COMMENT: ZIMBABWE'S FIFTH PARLIAMENT IS STILL
GOING THROUGH A TUMULTUOUS INFANCY, AND IT IS LIKELY TO
HAVE MANY TANTRUMS BEFORE IT GROWS UP. HOWEVER, IT IS
DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE EVEN A MORE MATURE PARLIAMENT
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PAGE 03 HARARE 05003 03 OF 03 110846Z
ALTERING GOVERNMENT POLICY ON KEY ISSUES SUCH AS LAND
RESETTLEMENT, ECONOMIC REFORM, AND MILITARY ENGAGEMENT
IN THE DROC. ZANU-PF REMAINS IN FIRM CONTROL OF ALL THE
INSTRUMENTS OF GOVERNMENT, INCLUDING PARLIAMENT. IF
NOTHING ELSE, THE REVITALIZED LEGISLATURE IS LIKELY TO
RAISE THE PROFILE OF ORDINARY CITIZENS' CONCERNS, SUCH
AS PRICE INCREASES AND THE DECLINE IN GOVERNMENT
SERVICES. THIS WILL INCREASE THE PRESSURE ON THE
GOVERNMENT TO GET ITS FINANCIAL HOUSE IN ORDER SO THAT
IT CAN AT LEAST START TACKLING PROBLEMS IN A MEANINGFUL
WAY BEFORE THE 2002 ELECTION SEASON. PARLIAMENT RISKS
DISENCHANTING THE PUBLIC AND RELEGATING ITSELF TO
IRRELEVANCY, HOWEVER, IF IT CANNOT GET PAST THE STAGE OF
CONSTANT POLITICAL AND PERSONAL ATTACKS. THE BUDGET
BATTLE LATER THIS YEAR WILL TEST THE NEW PARLIAMENT'S
METTLE AND GIVE US A GOOD INDICATION OF WHETHER THIS
PARLIAMENT WILL HAVE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON TURNING THE
COUNTRY AROUND.

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